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IN THIS ISSUE:

News Releases—

News Releases

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USDA RELEASES COST OF FOOD AT HOME FOR SEPTEMBER

WASHINGTON, Nov. 14—Here is the U.S. Department of Agriculture's monthly update of the weekly cost of food at home for September 1991:

Cost of food at home for a week in September 1991

	Food plans (In Dollars)			
	Thrifty	Low-cost	Moderate cost	Liberal
Families:				
Family of 2 (20-50 years)	48.60	60.90	75.10	93.10
Family of 2 (51 years and over)	46.10	58.60	72.20	86.10
Family of 4 with preschool children	71.00	88.00	107.50	131.60
Family of 4 with elementary schoolchildren	81.20	103.50	129.30	155.30
Individuals in four-person families:				
Children:				
1-2 years	12.90	15.60	18.20	21.90
3-5 years	13.90	17.00	21.00	25.10
6-8 years	16.90	22.50	28.20	32.70
9-11 years	20.10	25.60	32.80	38.00
Females:				
12-19 years	21.10	25.00	30.20	36.50
20-50 years	21.00	25.90	31.40	40.00
51 and over	20.80	25.20	31.10	37.00

Males:				
12-14 years	20.80	28.90	36.00	42.30
15-19 years	21.70	29.90	37.10	43.00
20-50 years	23.20	29.50	36.90	44.60
51 and over	21.10	28.10	34.50	41.30

USDA's Human Nutrition Information Service computes the cost of food at home for four food plans—thrifty, low-cost, moderate-cost, and liberal.

Sue Ann Ritchko, HNIS administrator, said the plans consist of foods that provide well-balanced meals and snacks for a week.

In computing the costs, USDA assumes all food is bought at the store and prepared at home. Costs do not include alcoholic beverages, pet food, soap, cigarettes, paper goods and other nonfood items bought at the store.

"USDA costs are only guides to spending," Ritchko said. "Families may spend more or less, depending on such factors as where they buy their food, how carefully they plan and buy, whether some food is produced at home, what foods the family likes, and how much food is prepared at home."

"Most families will find the moderate-cost or low-cost plan suitable," she said. "The thrifty plan, which USDA uses to set the coupon allotment in the food stamp program, is for families who have tighter budgets. Families with unlimited resources might use the liberal plan."

To use the chart to estimate your family's food costs:

—For members eating all meals at home—or carried from home—use the amounts shown in the chart.

—For members eating some meals out, deduct 5 percent for each meal eaten away from home from the amount shown for the appropriate family member. Thus, for a person eating lunch out 5 days a week, subtract 25 percent, or one-fourth the cost shown.

—For guests, add 5 percent of the amount shown for the proper age group for each meal.

Costs in the second part of the chart pertain to individuals in four-person families. If your family has more or less than four, total the "individual" figures and make these adjustments (note: larger families tend to buy and use food more economically than smaller ones):

—For a one-person family, add 20 percent.

—For a two-person family, add 10 percent.
—For a three-person family, add 5 percent.
—For a five- or six-person family, subtract 5 percent.
—For a family of seven or more, subtract 10 percent.

Details of the four family food plans are available from the Nutrition Education Division, HNIS, USDA, Federal Building, Hyattsville, Md. 20782.

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#

SCS ASSISTS OAKLAND RESIDENTS IN WAKE OF DEVASTATING FIRE

WASHINGTON, Nov. 14—The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Soil Conservation Service is assisting the city of Oakland, Calif., in protecting homes and minimizing damage to area watersheds caused by recent fires.

To date, $2 million in Federal Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) funds have been released for this work.

SCS, in cooperation with and under the oversight of the city of Oakland, has already begun revegetation efforts to stabilize and prevent erosion in burned areas.

Funded activities include seeding to establish cover; critical area treatment, including mulching and hydroseeding; installing trash racks and removing debris to clear channels and reduce the possibility of flooding; and establishing other watershed protection devices.

"Immediately stabilizing the burned area with vegetation is critical," said SCS Chief William Richards. "Had we waited just a couple of weeks, we would have missed the seeding season. If grass isn't growing by the winter rainy season, there could be severe erosion problems on the steep slopes."

Following the fire, teams of SCS specialists were assembled at the request of the Alameda County Resource Conservation District and the city of Oakland to study soil erosion problems in the steeply sloping burn area. The group evaluated soil conditions, charted the water flow and looked for sediment and debris control opportunities.

"Oakland and the Soil Conservation Service are working aggressively to protect Oakland's homes, hills and water quality in the burn area,"

Richards said. "Recovery is far from complete, but the environmental healing process has begun."

Ted Kupelian (202) 720-5776

#

USDA ANNOUNCES FISCAL 1992 SOAP/COAP ALLOCATIONS AND A CHANGE TO CASH BONUSES

WASHINGTON, Nov. 14—Acting Under Secretary of Agriculture John Campbell today announced opportunities for sales of 190,000 metric tons of sunflowerseed oil and 140,000 metric tons of cottonseed oil under the U.S. Department of Agriculture's fiscal 1992 Sunflowerseed Oil and Cottonseed Oil Assistance Programs.

In addition, Campbell said USDA will begin paying bonuses under the two programs in cash, as provided for in the recently enacted agricultural appropriations legislation for fiscal 1992 (H.R.2698). Bonuses formerly had been paid in in-kind commodities from the stocks of USDA's Commodity Credit Corporation.

Payments to exporters will continue to be issued by the Kansas City Commodity Office and exporters should continue to submit required shipment documents to the offices specified in the SOAP/COAP announcements.

Fiscal 1992 SOAP/COAP allocations are listed below in metric tons:

Country	SOAP	COAP
Algeria	40,000	
Dominican Republic		10,000
Egypt	40,000	60,000
El Salvador		20,000
Mexico	30,000	
Turkey	30,000	30,000
USSR	30,000	
Venezuela	20,000	20,000
Total	190,000	140,000

Sales of oil will be made to buyers in these countries through normal commercial channels at competitive world prices. The export sales will be facilitated with cash bonus payments. The bonus will enable U.S.

exporters to compete at commercial prices in these markets.

SOAP/COAP invitations for each of the countries and revised SOAP/COAP announcements governing the programs and outlining the cash bonus payment mechanism will be issued in the near future. The invitations will expire Sept. 30, 1992.

For more information call Randy Baxter, (202) 720-5540, or L.T. McElvain, (202) 720-0775.

Sally Klusaritz (202) 720-3448

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SECRETARY MADIGAN CALLS FOR PUBLIC COMMENTS ON MILK MARKETING ORDERS

WASHINGTON, Nov. 15—Secretary of Agriculture Edward Madigan is inviting comments from the dairy industry and the general public regarding the future of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's milk marketing orders, Acting Secretary Roland Vautour said today.

The comment period will run until March 2, 1992, Vautour said.

Federal milk marketing orders regulate the minimum prices paid dairy farmers by handlers of Grade "A" milk in specified geographical areas. Since they were established under the Agricultural Marketing Agreement Act of 1937, milk marketing orders have been modified periodically to keep pace with changes in the structure of the dairy industry.

"Recently, concerns have increased about the cost, efficiency and rationale of milk marketing orders," Madigan said. "Are there more efficient, more competitive ways to give consumers a dependable supply of milk and, at the same time, give dairy farmers a fair return for their product?"

In a separate but related action, USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service today announced the preliminary findings of its 43 days of hearings held last year on milk marketing orders. (USDA Release No. 1108-91)

"I am not satisfied that all of the issues were thoroughly aired during the AMS hearings, so I am posing a number of questions to the dairy industry and the general public which are aimed at a more fundamental assessment of milk marketing orders," Madigan said.

The questions are:

—Would producers, processors and consumers be better served with

less regulation or strengthened regulation under federal milk orders? What would be the impact of less regulation, stronger regulation or no regulation on producers, processors and consumers?

—What institutions have other countries used in milk marketing that shed light on our own system? Are there particular aspects of milk marketing that are carried out more equitably or efficiently in other countries than in the United States?

—Could contractual arrangements between cooperatives and handlers replace some of the functions now performed by the federal order system? If so, which functions?

—If federal orders are changed to impose less regulation, what types of changes should be made? For example, should the following changes be implemented:

(1) Lowering of minimum Class I differentials.

(2) Removal of pricing regulations that cause purchasers to pay more under the order for milk brought into a market than would otherwise be necessary to attract the milk to that market.

(3) Establishing the lowest class price under federal orders (usually Class III) equal to the federal support price for milk (instead of the Minnesota-Wisconsin price)?

—If the orders should be strengthened, what specific additional rules are warranted?

—Should the orders be terminated? If so, should this be done immediately or should the orders be phased out over a period of time; and, if so, how much time?

Responses should be sent by March 2, 1992, to the Secretary of Agriculture, Milk Marketing Orders, USDA, Washington, D.C. 20250.

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#

USDA RECOMMENDS AMENDMENTS TO ALL FEDERAL MILK MARKETING ORDERS

WASHINGTON, Nov. 15—The U.S. Department of Agriculture is recommending amendment of all federal milk marketing orders to make a three-class pricing system standard in all orders, and to provide a mechanism for pricing reconstituted milk similarly to the way fresh whole milk is priced.

Daniel D. Haley, administrator of USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service, said the changes are based on an extensive study of the nearly 10,000 pages of testimony taken at a 43-day national hearing held last fall on pricing under federal milk marketing orders.

The three-class system prices milk by its uses, with drinking milk (Class I) receiving a premium over milk used for soft products like cottage cheese, ice cream and yogurt (Class II), and with milk used for milk powder, butter and hard cheese (Class III) receiving the lowest price. Several federal milk orders with a two-class pricing system had requested conversion to a three-class system last year, Haley said. Testimony at the hearings last fall universally supported the three-class system, he said.

In recommending consistency in the milk orders' pricing system, USDA also is recommending consistent definitions for the milk products within the classes, Haley said. Consistent definitions would simplify administration of the orders, he said.

Reconstituted milk used for drinking purposes (Class I) has been subject to an extra charge under the orders. The extra charge was intended to make pricing of such milk approximate pricing for whole fresh milk. Recognizing the merit of arguments made for reconsidering the extra charge, USDA is recommending that concentrated and non-fat dried milk shipped between markets and reconstituted for Class I use be treated similarly to transfers of whole milk. In this way, Haley said, the higher value of the reconstituted milk can be passed back to the shipping market.

Haley said that no changes in the orders are being made in response to proposals raised at the hearing which would change Class I and Class II pricing. "The hearing evidence does not support changes in price differentials under the milk marketing order program," he said.

USDA is taking no action as well on several other proposals advanced at the hearings, Haley added. These include calls for national pooling,

elimination of price differentials for Grade A milk and for costs of haulage; establishing ''floor'' prices from which class prices are calculated; seasonal incentive pricing programs; adopting a supply-demand ''adjustor'; and providing balancing payments to defray costs of disposing of reserve milk supplies. The record did not support these changes at this time, Haley said.

Details of these recommendations will be published as a ''recommended decision'' in the Nov. 22 Federal Register. Comments and exceptions should be sent to the Hearing Clerk, USDA, Room 1083-S, Washington, D.C. 20250, by Dec. 31. Copies of the recommended decision are available from the Dairy Divsion, AMS, USDA, Room 2968-S, P.O. Box 96456, Washington, D.C. 20090-6456, tel. (202) 720-4829, or from any federal milk market administrator's office.

Clarence Steinberg (202) 720-6179

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USDA PLANS NO ADJUSTMENT IN 1992 FEED GRAIN ARP

WASHINGTON, Nov. 15—Acting Secretary of Agriculture Roland Vautour today said there will be no adjustment in the previously announced 5 percent acreage reduction program (ARP) for corn, grain sorghum and barley and in the zero percent ARP for oats in 1992.

The Food, Agriculture, Conservation and Trade Act of 1990 requires the secretary of agriculture to announce the feed grain ARP on or before Sept. 30. A 5 percent ARP for the 1992-crops of corn, grain sorghum and barley and a zero percent ARP for oats were announced on that date.

The Act also authorizes the secretary to make adjustments in the 1992 program no later than Nov. 15 if the total supply of feed grains changed significantly after the 1992 ARPs were first announced. Since the initial announcement, estimated feed grain supplies for the 1992 crop are up about 1 percent—not enough to warrant a change in the ARP percentage.

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USDA PROPOSES RULES FOR TRANSFERRING DOGS AND CATS FROM POUNDS TO DEALERS

WASHINGTON, Nov. 18—The U.S. Department of Agriculture is proposing new rules under the Animal Welfare Act to protect dogs and cats being moved from pounds and shelters to dealers that supply research and teaching institutions with laboratory animals.

The proposal sets a five-day minimum holding period during which pounds and animal shelters must hold dogs and cats before selling or giving them to dealers that supply these institutions. The proposal also requires a certificate of origin for such transfers.

"The proposed rules are required by amendments during 1990 to the Animal Welfare Act intended to keep stolen dogs and cats from being sold as laboratory animals," said Joan M. Arnoldi, deputy administrator for regulatory enforcement and animal care in USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service. "The new rules will strengthen existing requirements prepared after passage of the original Animal Welfare Act in 1966."

The 1990 Congressional amendments mandate a holding period of at least five days, during which the dogs and cats involved must receive appropriate care. The proposed APHIS regulation specifies a holding period of five full days, excluding time in transit and the day of acquisition, plus an extra day or two if needed to include one Saturday.

Arnoldi said she wants the holding period to include one Saturday for the convenience of pet owners who work a standard work week, so they could recover their pet.

The 1990 amendments require a certificate of origin to document that the required holding period has been met. APHIS is proposing that the certificate record the description and identification number of the animal involved; the name, address and identification of the parties transferring the animal; and a declaration that the animal might be used for research or educational purposes. The dates on which the animal was acquired and transferred would be included. The same information would be required each additional time the animal changed hands until it reached its ultimate destination. The certificate would have to be preserved and available for at least one year.

Arnoldi said not all pounds and shelters provide dogs or cats to dealers. Currently, 12 states prohibit such transactions. Other pounds and shelters voluntarily abstain from this practice. For pounds and shelters

that do provide dogs and cats to dealers, the impact of the proposed rule would depend on how long these animals are currently held. At least one state, Minnesota, already requires dogs and cats to be held for five days.

Notice of the proposed action is being published in the Nov. 15 Federal Register. Comments will be accepted if they are received on or before Dec. 16. An original and three copies of written comments referring to Docket 91-035 should be sent to Chief, Regulatory Analysis and Development, PPD-APHIS-USDA, Room 866 Federal Building, 6505 Belcrest Road, Hyattsville, Md. 20782. Comments may be inspected as soon as received at USDA, Room 1141 South Building, 14th Street and Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C., between 8:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, except holidays.

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#

USDA EXPANDS EIGHT RESOURCE CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT AREAS

WASHINGTON, Nov. 18—Eight Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) Areas in six states have been expanded as part of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's rural revitalization efforts.

The expansions adds 18 counties to RC&D areas in Georgia, Kentucky, Indiana, New York, Pennsylvania and Texas.

"We're looking forward to working with more communities to assist local people in improving their economy and conserving natural resources," said William Richards, chief of USDA's Soil Conservation Service.

Administered by SCS, the RC&D program was established 27 years ago to work with local RC&D councils in improving resource conservation and economic opportunities in designated RC&D areas. USDA provides each area with a project coordinator.

Council members represent county governments, soil and water conservation districts, towns, water districts, and other nonprofit groups. Today, 4,600 council members volunteer their time in 209 RC&D areas nationwide.

Councils have broad authority to seek help from the sources they feel are best qualified to provide assistance. Such help may be technical assistance from USDA agencies or other federal agencies, state and local

governments, local conservation districts, or private industry. Financial assistance is obtained through a variety of donation, loan, grant, and costsharing programs.

Typical council projects include improving community facilities such as hospitals, schools, and water and sewage treatment plants; marketing local products; developing recreational facilities; controlling erosion; and constructing flood protection.

In fiscal 1991, RC&D councils completed 1,250 projects valued at $145 million. About 9 percent of these funds came from the RC&D program itself; the rest were obtained from other federal programs and state and local organizations.

RC&D areas being expanded are listed in the following table:

State	Name of RC&D Area	Added Counties
Georgia	Tri-County	Bleckley, Dodge, Pulaski, Telfair, Laurens, Wilcox
Kentucky	Cumberland Valley	Estill, Leslie
Indiana	Arrow Head	Cass, Miami
	Historic Hoosier Hills	Clark
New York	Seneca Trail	Livingston, Erie (part)
Pennsylvania	Pocono Northeast	Columbia, Northumberland
Texas	Rio Bravo	Duval
	North Rolling Plains	Roberts, Ochiltree

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#

FGIS, EC OILSEED PROCESSORS LAUNCH COOPERATIVE STUDY OF SOYBEAN QUALITY

WASHINGTON, Nov. 18—The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Federal Grain Inspection Service and the European Community Seed Crushers' and Oil Processors' Federation (FEDIOL) will perform a cooperative study of soybean quality between origin and destination ports.

The study will involve sampling and analyzing soybeans in one hold of each of six shiploads traveling from the United States to Western Europe.

According to FGIS Administrator John C. Foltz, the project provides an opportunity for U.S. and EC inspectors to share sampling and inspection techniques, and to evaluate changes in quality between the time of sampling at U.S. and European ports.

"This study is the first time that official U.S. inspection procedures will be used both at origin and destination to determine the effects of shipping and handling on the quality of U.S. soybean shipments destined for European markets," Foltz said.

Later this month, an FGIS specialist will travel to Europe to test the sampling equipment and provide direction to USDA's Agricultural Research Service, which will sample subsequent cargoes at destination on behalf of FGIS.

The data from the study will provide valuable information about the effects of handling on soybean quality, Foltz said.

Dana Stewart (202) 720-0135

#

USDA PROPOSES 1992 NATIONAL PEANUT POUNDAGE QUOTA

WASHINGTON, Nov. 18—The U.S. Department of Agriculture today proposed a national peanut poundage quota for the 1992 marketing year of 1,610,000 short tons (3,220 million pounds), up 60,000 short tons (120 million pounds) from the 1991 level.

Keith Bjerke, administrator of USDA's Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service, said USDA is required by the 1990 Farm Bill to announce the final national poundage quota for 1992 marketing year peanuts by Dec. 15. The quota may be no less than 1,350,000 short tons.

The Agricultural Adjustment Act of 1938, as amended, requires the national poundage quota for the 1992 crop of peanuts to be equal to the

quantity of peanuts that the secretary of agriculture estimates will be devoted to domestic edible, seed and related use in the 1992 marketing year. The marketing year for peanuts begins Aug. 1. It is also stipulated the quota may be no less than 1,350,000 short tons.

All available information will be considered prior to the final determination, Bjerke said.

Notice of the proposed determinations will appear in the Nov. 21 Federal Register.

Comments concerning the determination must be received no later than Dec. 9 by the Director, Commodity Analysis Division, USDA-ASCS, Room 3741, South Building, P.O. Box 2415, Washington, D.C. 20013; FAX number (202) 720-8261.

Robert Feist (202) 720-6789

#

USDA IMPLEMENTS SIX CHANGES IN REGULATIONS FOR CATTLE BRUCELLOSIS

WASHINGTON, Nov. 19—The U.S. Department of Agriculture is implementing six changes in the existing brucellosis regulations, including a provision to allow movement of cattle from approved intermediate handling facilities to quarantined feedlots. The changes are effective Dec. 20.

"Intermediate handling facilities are assembly points for cattle being transported over long distances," said Lonnie King, Deputy Administrator of USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service. "Under current rules, these facilities may be used only for moving cattle directly to slaughter. Expanding the use of these facilities will make it easier to assemble full truckloads going to quarantined feedlots."

The other five changes will:

—Relax the present requirement that intermediate handling facilities be located apart from other livestock handling facilities. The change will require separation only from facilities handling breeding stock.

—Lower the minimum allowable potency of official calfhood vaccines, to extend their shelf-life.

—Specify conditions under which the standard card test may be used as an official test for vaccinated animals at approved stockyards.

—Allow a herd to keep certification as free of brucellosis even if an

animal is found to react to a diagnostic test, provided that other evidence, such as cultures from tissues or milk, demonstrates that the herd is not infected.

—Permit rodeo bulls to move interstate on the basis of a single annual test.

"Taken together, the six proposed changes will remove restrictions on the cattle industry without significantly increasing the risk of spreading brucellosis," King said. "Basically, the proposals accommodate changes in cattle movement and marketing and respond to other industry concerns."

Brucellosis, also called Bang's disease, is an infectious bacterial disease that causes abortions, reduced fertility and lower milk yields in cattle. The disease can be transmitted to humans.

The final rule changes in the brucellosis regulations are being published in the Nov. 20 Federal Register as docket 90-232.

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#

ANNUAL MEDICS—LITTLE-KNOWN PLANTS RATE ATTENTION

WASHINGTON—Gary Bauchan thinks some insect pests will not be tickled when they inch their way along a plant stem full of tiny hairs.

Bauchan, a U.S. Department of Agriculture scientist, said the hairs act like a fence to block the pest larvae from reaching the plant's leaves. Without the leaves as food, the insect will starve on the stem.

This hairy defensive trait is natural on Medicago scutellata's plants. M. scutellata is in a family of legumes called annual medics. They are little known in this country.

Bauchan, a plant geneticist with USDA's Agricultural Research Service, is working to change that. He said M. scutellata's genetic trait is worth examining as a "natural way to protect farmers' alfalfa crops now vulnerable to alfalfa weevil larvae and potato leafhoppers." Today, these two pests—costing farmers millions of dollars in damaged alfalfa—have a clear shot up the plant's stem, which is as smooth as a ball point pen. Farmers heavily rely on alfalfa, a high-protein crop, to feed livestock.

Bauchan is undertaking studies of the hairy genetic trait at the Soybean and Alfalfa Research Laboratory Beltsville, Md. He said it may be

possible "to switch the gene to alfalfa in the future using biotechnology techniques."

M. scutellata and other annual medics are relatives of alfalfa in a group of plants known as Medicago. One key difference: annual medics need to be seeded each year, while alfalfa is a perennial and does not require reseeding.

What also makes annual medics appealing as gene donors, he said, is their ability to fix nitrogen in the soil, as does alfalfa. If planted ahead of crops such as grains, the medics—like their alfalfa cousins—would be "prime candidates as a low-cost fertilizer for sustainable agriculture."

Also, he said, annual medics have other traits that are now being checked out for possible use to improve both alfalfa and other medics species. Among these traits are disease resistance, higher protein levels, increased yields and tolerance to salty sils.

Bauchan's search for likely medics species bearing desirable genetic traits, such as hairy stems, gained momentum last year. He and University of Maryland researchers grew at Beltsville 1,220 samples—collected from 3,159 stored at the ARS annual medics collection in Pullman, Wash.

They evaluated the 1,220 samples for 18 key traits. Using a computer analysis, they selected 210 accessions, or samples, as a "core collection" for breeding.

Bauchan is now waiting for evaluations of the collection from field trials at five locations across the United States—Beltsville, St. Paul, Minn., Logan, Utah, Pullman, and Tucson, Ariz.

"Until now, the potential of annual medics has been largely untapped in this country," Bauchan said. "Now that we have the new collection, plant breeders will have a much easier task in sorting out the varieties that hold the most potential."

Australian breeders have released more than 20 annual medic varieties for use in their country, but they aren't suited to the U.S. climate. Medics, warm weather plants thought to have originated in the Mediterranean, are grown on about 74 million acres in Australia.

"We need to know what the merits are of all the medics species," Bauchan said. "We haven't given the annual medics a fair chance to show us the types of genetic diversity they have, or how they can be used in sustainable agriculture."

Sean Adams (301) 344-3108
Issued: November 19, 1991

#

USDA ISSUES EIGHT PERMITS TO FIELD TEST GENETICALLY ENGINEERED PLANTS

WASHINGTON, Nov. 19—In September and October, the U.S. Department of Agriculture issued eight permits to commercial companies to field test genetically engineered crop plants.

"USDA has been issuing certification permits since 1987 for controlled field trials of certain genetically engineered crops in small, isolated plots," said Terry L. Medley, director of Biotechnology, Biologics, and Environmental Protection for USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service.

The eight permits were issued as follows:

—Pioneer Hi-Bred International Inc., Johnston, Iowa, received permission for two field tests on corn engineered to produce wheat germ agglutinin. One permit covers a test in Kauai County, Hawaii; the other covers a similar test in Dade County, Fla. APHIS made separate evaluations of the two trials because the environment in the locations involved is different.

Wheat germ agglutinin, a protein, is being evaluated as a method to boost the internal resistance of corn to insect pests like the European corn borer. Internal resistance reduces the need for chemical insecticides. The engineered protein appears to kill insects by disrupting the function of their gut. The protein gene was transferred to corn by attaching it to microscopic particles fired with a special gun in the laboratory.

—Monsanto Agricultural Company, St. Louis, Mo., received permission to do field work with cotton in Kauai County, Hawaii. Monsanto is testing another approach to genetically engineered insect resistance, using a gene taken from a beneficial bacterium, Bacillus thuringiensis. This bacterium, popularly known as Bt, produces a protein that is toxic to some insects and is currently used in several commercial biological pesticides.

—Monsanto also received permission for a field test in Isabela, P.R., using soybean plants tolerant to the herbicide glyphosate. The genes that convey herbicide tolerance were attached to microscopic particles and fired into soybean plant cells with a special gun in the laboratory.

—The Upjohn Company, Kalamazoo, Mich., received two renewals of permits granted in the previous season for field tests with plants tolerant to the phosphinothricin class of herbicides. One permit covers herbicidetolerant corn to be planted in Kalamazoo County, Mich., and

Isabela, P.R. The other permit covers herbicide-tolerant soybeans in experimental plots in Isabela, P.R.

—Calgene, Inc., Davis, Calif., received permission for two sets of field tests with genetically engineered rapeseed plants. The rapeseed plants contain a gene from turnip rape that is expected to improve oil composition by enhancing fatty acid production. One permit covers a test in Yolo and Imperial Counties, Calif. The other covers tests in Baker, Sumter and Tift Counties, Georgia. APHIS made separate evaluations because the environment in the general areas involved is different.

In addition to needing APHIS permits for field tests, researchers need permits to import or ship certain plants and organisms—but not for conducting laboratory or greenhouse tests. Genetic engineering uses laboratory techniques to transfer genetic material between living organisms, intended to give them added inherited traits beneficial to agriculture.

Permits for field trials are granted only after a team of multidisciplinary APHIS scientists determines there is no risk of introducing or disseminating a plant pest and no significant impact on the environment. Permits generally are issued for a single growing season, but they can be renewed.

APHIS scientists focus on the biology, propagation and cultivation of the plant species being altered. They review the source species of the engineered genes, the vector and vector agents used to transfer the genes and the stability of the insertion.

Reviewers also look into the origin and safety of marker genes used in many experiments to help differentiate engineered plants from standard plants. The reviewers cover the design and management of the field plot and the disposition of the test plants. They also check potential impact on endangered and threatened plants and animals.

Copies of environmental assessments for all field tests are available from Mary Petrie, USDA, APHIS, BBEP, 847 Federal Building, Hyattsville, Md. 20782.

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#

USDA PROPOSES FAT-LOWERING CHANGES FOR LAMB GRADING STANDARDS

WASHINGTON, Nov. 20—The U.S. Department of Agriculture is proposing changes in the U.S. standards for lamb and mutton that would encourage the production of leaner lamb.

Daniel D. Haley, administrator of USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service, said the proposal would achieve fat reduction in grading standards by "coupling" quality and yield grades. Coupling would require carcasses to be graded simultaneously for quality and yield.

USDA also would require that grades be applied to carcasses only after removal of most of their kidney and pelvic fat. Requiring the removal of pelvic and kidney fat (which is considerable in sheep) prior to weighing carcasses for determining their "dressed" yields would remove a major incentive for overfattening lambs.

Currently, U.S. quality grades for lamb—U.S. Prime, Choice, Good—can be applied independently of obtaining a yield grade, and yield grading of lamb is uncommon, Haley said.

"Ultimate payment to producers would be more for the lean portion of the carcass than the fat," Haley said.

The proposal also would drop "leg conformation" scoring, part of the lamb and mutton yield grade criteria since their inception in 1969. Conformation, or external shape, can be affected both by fat and muscle, and therefore may not be a true measure of the ratio of "lean" in an animal, USDA researchers have found.

USDA tried various mechanical and electronic methods of measuring fatness of a lamb carcass to predict how a carcass would yield, but found nothing more accurate and efficient than an experienced grader's examination of the fat covering of a carcass' ribeye. Too much fat there can mean too much fat elsewhere in the carcass, with the yield of a carcass lowered accordingly.

The American Sheep Industry Association, chief proponent of the changes, believes implementation of the proposals is essential to accommodate U.S. consumers' preference for leaner meat, Haley said. The changes would apply to standards for grading sheep carcasses as well as to live sheep traded on the basis of grades, he said.

As in all USDA grading programs, use of the lamb grading service is voluntary and paid for by the user.

Details of the proposed changes in the lamb and mutton grading standards will appear as a proposed rule in the Nov. 20 Federal Register. These changes will be discussed at an open public meeting in Denver, Colo. Dec. 10.

Copies of the notice and details of the meeting are available from Herbert C. Abraham, Livestock and Meat Standardization Branch, AMS, USDA, rm. 2603-S, P.O. Box 96456, Washington, D.C. 20090-6456; tel. (202) 720-4486. Comments on the Federal Register proposal should be sent to him by Dec. 20.

Clarence Steinberg (202) 720-6179

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AID PACKAGE TO USSR

CREDIT GUARANTEES

The additional $1.25 billion in credit guarantees to be made available to the USSR as a result of President Bush's Nov. 20 announcement will be provided under the Commodity Credit Corporation's GSM-102 export credit program. This program had been used to provide $2.5 billion in guarantees prior to the November 20 announcement. Any U.S. agricultural commodity is eligible for coverage under this program and selection is made by the buyer. The guarantees made available will cover all principal, as well as interest up to the prevailing 52 week Treasury Bill rate.

Exactly $500 million will be made available as soon as details of the desired commodity mix are made final. Additional amounts of $250 million each will be made available on February 1, March 1, and April 1, 1992. The commodities purchased with the assistance of this program should provide a steady flow of food to the USSR during the period of winter hardship. The USSR has made all scheduled payments which have so far fallen due on transactions guaranteed under the GSM-102 program.

HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

The missions to the USSR headed by Secretary Madigan and Under Secretary Crowder indicated that some areas of the USSR will be particularly hard hit by shortages in food supplies this winter. It is very possible that a need for food aid to vulnerable groups will develop in these regions. The regions to be initially targeted are Armenia and the

Urals region of the Russian Republic. To the degree practicable this assistance will be provided through American and indigenous private voluntary organizations (PVO's). The assistance will be provided under auspices of the Section 416(b) and Food for Progress programs administered by the Department of Agriculture, and it has been determined that up to $165 million can be provided without having any impact on other countries benefiting from these food aid programs. Initial consultations have been held with a number of PVO's regarding their potential participation.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

The president announced five separate technical assistance activities designed to improve Soviet food production and, importantly, distribution.

1) A model demonstration farm in the St. Petersburg region

This project is designed to bring an example of American farm management to new, private farmers in one of the more progressive regions of the USSR. The farm, operated by an American farm family, will be supplemented with an effort to reach out to Soviet farmers in the region and help them learn private management skills and maximize the output from the level of technology and resources available to them. We expect to coordinate the project with other similar activities being undertaken by U.S. organizations, and to incorporate initial processing of food products.

2) Wholesale Market Team

As leading population centers, Kiev and Moscow have been selected as appropriate locations for efforts to assist in wholesale market development. A group of U.S. private and public sector experts will help Soviets work from existing rudimentary private markets to develop the infrastructure necessary for efficient wholesale markets. Possible focuses include price discovery and market information, trading rules and their enforcement, and product standards. An initial team is planned for January. Within USDA, the Agricultural Marketing Service and Foreign Agricultural Service are working on this project.

3) Extension Service Projects in Armenia, Kazakistan and Uzbekistan

Three republics have been selected as the focus for efforts to help the Soviet extension services develop the services particularly needed by private farmers, and to broaden their activity beyond a narrow production

orientation. Activities will include developing skills farmers and agribusinessmen need to prosper in a market economy, establishing effective linkages with important parts of the agricultural science network and developing leadership capabilities in rural communities. The American approach to extension work has been among the best received technical assistance projects in Eastern Europe. This activity will be executed by USDA's Extension Service which has considerable overseas experience.

4) Lending U.S. Private Sector Executives

The private sector executives who accompanied Secretary Madigan to the USSR in October judged that U.S. management techniques could improve the output of existing food processing and distribution facilities by 25 percent. One of the best ways for this to happen is to place U.S. executives in receptive Soviet enterprises for work assignments of three to 12 months. By working together with Soviet managers on the day to day problems of these enterprises American managers will be able to convey a sense of how to make market-driven decisions in a "hands-on" way. Efforts to recruit U.S. volunteer companies will begin immediately, and we expect to field a team to select appropriate Soviet enterprises in January. The Foreign Agricultural Service will coordinate this project, but most resources are expected to come fhe contributing U.S. companies and their Soviet hosts.

5) Credit Guarantees for U.S./Soviet Food Processing and Distribution Projects

The 1990 Farm Bill for the first time authorizes the direct use of credit guarantees for facilities. It is anticipated that the program will work on a cost-sharing basis and apply to projects that directly improve Soviet food processing and distribution capabilities, have a significant U.S. private sector involvement, as well as carry the potential for trade expansion. Efforts are underway to develop precise criteria and operational details. For the Soviet side this effort has the potential to deliver both improved technology and managerial expertise.

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